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9 SEP 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Support

SUBJECT : Terms of Reference for a Study of
Foreign Language Policy in CIA

1. This memorandum contains a suggested course of action for your consideration; this course of action is contained in paragraph 7.

2. Over the past 10 years a great deal of research and study has been done on CIA's need for a foreign language policy. Reports have been submitted and recommendations have been made, but the fact remains that the Agency today still has no effective policy. I believe that action has lagged because some of the recommendations contained mandatory provisions. There has been a reluctance or an unwillingness to face up to the fact that foreign language qualifications must be made mandatory. In actual practice, there has been a preference for a permissive policy. Until this situation is corrected, I believe that we will continue to have an ineffective policy. If those in positions of responsibility for the affairs of CIA wish to see it attain and maintain a position pre-eminent among the national security agencies of the government, I believe that they will have to accept the fact that foreign language qualifications must become mandatory. I believe that any action short of this will make it impossible for CIA to keep abreast of the developing programs and growing language capabilities of other Departments and Agencies of the U.S. Government. In this paper we suggest steps which I believe must be taken prior to the issuance of a foreign language qualifications regulation.

3. Headquarters Regulation [] (5 August 1963) assigns responsibility to the Deputy Directors for determining foreign language competence and for assuring that personnel under their jurisdiction acquire and maintain foreign language proficiency. []

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quirements for personnel with foreign language competence. Beyond

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these provisions, there are no guide lines on the selection of personnel for language training, the assignment of personnel with language competence, or on the career development of personnel with respect to language proficiency. In the absence of such specific policy guidance, the matter of foreign language competence is left largely up to immediate supervisors and employees themselves. Under this system, there is no way of knowing whether the right languages are being studied and whether the proficiencies acquired in them meet Agency needs. In effect a Branch-and-Desk-Chief policy is followed and even this is subject to change whenever these officers are reassigned. In some instances this results in the application of an enlightened policy, but usually of relatively short duration; in other instances, it results in a policy of indifference.

4. With the present emphasis within Government on greater economy in operations and on more efficient use of manpower, the Agency's foreign language competence becomes an even more pressing and urgent matter. The Department of State, Department of Defense, United States Information Agency, and the Agency for International Development all have firm policies for satisfying their foreign language needs. Fortunately, there seems to be a growing awareness within CIA of a need to maintain pace with these other agencies. An indication of this is the DDP's present intensive language testing program--aimed first of all at testing employees with claimed competence in Spanish, French, and German. That much remains to be done in this regard, however, is borne out in a special report by the Office of Personnel which shows that as of 31 December 1964 only about one-half of the Agency's spoken skills and one-third of its reading skills in the intermediate and higher levels have been tested in eight major languages (French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Portuguese, Italian). For all languages at all proficiency levels, the percentage of skills tested was about 35 per cent. The report also shows that the Agency will face an increasing problem of replacing language skills that are lost through the attrition of older employees, as these employees have more than their proportionate share of language skills.

*Personnel
increasing problem
from 1967 on*

5. In 1960, the Inspector General recommended to the DCI that he "issue instructions that Agency Regulations be amended by adding new provisions (a) directing the Deputy Directors to identify the categories of employees for whom specified degrees of language proficiency are required and to tie these standards of proficiency into promotion

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practices, and (b) directing the Deputy Directors to identify those positions, or that proportion of positions, in each overseas station that may be filled only by individuals who possess, to the degree specified, the language commonly used in the general area of that station." The DCI approved this recommendation with the modification that "standards of language proficiency will not be tied into promotion practices." How well the other provisions of this recommendation were carried out is unknown. Three studies have come to light, however, showing that serious efforts have been made in the past in this general direction. The first, "Minimum Language Requirements for the Deputy Director (Plans)," is dated 25 October 1957--three years before the Inspector General's recommendation. The other two, "Survey of Foreign Language Requirements" (for the DDS and DDI) were dated 9 February 1960 and 22 April 1960 respectively (see attachments).

6. These three studies probably no longer have much, if any, validity. The information in them should be re-verified and up-dated. Perhaps better, the studies should be discarded and a fresh approach made. In any case, the task is essentially one of fact finding and collecting information to determine the Agency's foreign language needs--both present and long-term needs. This information is not available in usable form at the present time. Once these needs have been determined, courses of action should be taken to satisfy those needs. Hopefully, this effort would result in the formulation of a foreign language policy which would make provision for the selection, training, career development, assignment, and promotion of personnel. This policy need not be uniform for all Directorates. To the contrary, it ought to be sufficiently flexible to take into account the individual needs and peculiarities of each Directorate. As I have previously stated, however, I believe such a policy would be of little value unless made mandatory.

7. The best approach would probably be to establish an overall Agency working group to collect and evaluate all relevant information and to submit recommendations for action. Initially, it would probably be desirable to establish a sub-group for each Directorate. The mission of the group(s) would be to examine the whole range of subject matter and problems which relate to a foreign language policy for the Agency. The following are illustrative:

a. Language Grouping. The problem is to identify those languages which are of greatest use to the Agency. One approach is to identify those languages which have broad application

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to the Agency's work and which are relatively easy to learn; and those languages which have more limited application but which are nonetheless essential and which are relatively difficult to learn. Two broad categories are suggested--world languages (French, Spanish, German, Russian) and hard languages (Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese, Vietnamese).

b. Language Proficiency Level. It would have to be decided what level of proficiency is to be acquired in each of the languages needed by the Agency.

c. Language Requirements. The aim here would be to determine what languages are needed at which field stations and bases. It would also have to be determined what languages are needed and in which components in Headquarters. With respect to the former, for example, this may best be done by identifying stations (bases) according to languages needed: stations where a world language is needed; stations where a hard language is needed; stations where both a world language and a hard language are needed; stations where languages of limited usefulness are needed; stations where other languages, including dialects, are needed but where a world language and English are primary alternate or secondary languages.

d. Language Capabilities. The present level of language competence in the Agency would have to be determined (language proficiency testing would have to be completed). Deficiencies would have to be identified in terms of specific languages and how critical the need for them is. Rates of entrance on duty and retirement of personnel would have to be reviewed in terms of how they would affect the Agency's level of language competence.

e. Plans to Satisfy Language Requirements. The total of language requirements when compared with language capabilities would provide a good idea of what has to be done to develop and to maintain a satisfactory level of language competence. Plans or actions to achieve and maintain this level would of necessity reflect Agency policy. For example, it would have to be decided whether it would be to the Agency's advantage to require officers to learn one or more of the world languages because of their usefulness and because they require less time and cost substantially less to learn. By the same token it would have to be decided who should learn hard languages: the extent to which senior officers should be trained in hard languages, which are costly and time consuming to learn; or whether it would be more efficient to train relatively junior officers in these languages. Other major areas of decision making which would have to be examined include such considerations as these:

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whether differentials should be authorized for candidates with tested language proficiency; whether employees should be required to attain foreign language proficiency as a part of career development; whether training should be prescribed before assignment in cases where an officer does not have foreign language qualifications for the assignment; whether acquisition of foreign language skills should have any effect on promotion, or whether lack of foreign language skills should limit promotion; whether there should be levels of proficiency established in the language or languages of the post of assignment and what impact such a procedure would have on the rotation and assignment of personnel.

8. The composite working group should probably include representatives from the four Directorates, principally from those components engaged in operations. In fact, it would seem that those concerned with operations should have the major responsibility for manning and directing such a group. By contrast, representatives of the Office of Training may be able to contribute best, simply as resource adjuncts rather than as members of the group. In this connection I might add that the Office of Training has studied and kept abreast of developments in the foreign language field in other agencies and thus has a store of information on methods of approach and problems to be considered. In the final analysis, however, those from the operating components are the ones really faced with this whole problem of foreign language competence. To have greatest effectiveness members of the working group would have to be fully empowered to collect the necessary information from whatever resources the Agency may have. If you agree that this might be the best approach, you may wish to have the proposal for establishing such a working group checked out with representatives of the Office of the Executive Director-Comptroller as well as with representatives of the other Directorates. You may also wish to consider whether the work of such a group ought to be made part of the Agency's long-term planning efforts.

9. Within this context, I might again advance my proposal for the establishment of a career development complement over and above the Agency's operating strength. Training not only takes employees away from their jobs but it is time consuming as well. This is especially true of foreign language training. Normally five to six months full-time are necessary to acquire a useful proficiency in the common languages and nine to twelve months in the more difficult languages. For example, six months full-time are usually necessary for German, nine for Russian, and twelve for Chinese. In each case, we are talking about an

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intermediate proficiency--a proficiency aimed more at speaking the language but with some proficiency in reading and very little in writing. If such a career development complement were established, I believe that the training would not only progress in a more orderly and efficient manner but the Agency's effectiveness and usefulness to the Government would increase as well.

10. As a final observation, deadlines for completing the study and for carrying out recommended courses of action probably ought to be established. For example, a deadline of 30 April 1966 may be both reasonable and realistic for completing the information-gathering phase. This would mean that all proficiency testing would have to be completed by that date. A deadline of 30 September 1966 may be set for reviewing and analyzing the findings and for submitting recommendations. The phasing of the next stage would depend on what actions are given approval. For example, if the decision should be made to have certain overseas positions filled with personnel who have specified language skills, it would probably require several years to carry it out. Therefore, a period of three years beginning 1 January 1967 may be required to implement anything that may be considered an effective and comprehensive foreign language program. While there is no need to take hasty action on this matter, I believe that it is of utmost importance to place it high on the list of priorities that must be done.

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MATTHEW BAIRD
Director of Training

Attachments - 3 asa

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